

LISTING OF AND AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A method for masking speech, comprising;

generating an electrical signal representative of the speech;

using said electrical signal to provide an audio signal which cancels the speech; and

providing a speech masking signal to mask any speech not canceled; wherein said speech masking signal is produced by:

sampling portions of the speech; and

providing the portions in reverse order;

wherein at least one of amplitude and frequency of the masking signal is changed at variable intervals.

2. (original) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said speech masking signal is supplied by a babble generator.

3. (original) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said speech masking signal is produced by rearranging the speech so that it is not intelligible.

4. - 5. (canceled)

6. (original) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said speech masking signal is produced by the steps of:

reading out digital representations of signals disruptive to the understanding of speech from a memory; and

converting the digital representations to said speech masking signal.

7. (original) A method as recited in claim 6, wherein said digital representations are in the form of one of pulse code modulation and adaptive pulse code modulation.

8. - 14. (canceled)

15. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said speech masking signal is produced by:

sampling portions of the speech; and

providing the portions in said reverse order and with a predetermined time delay.

16. - 19. (canceled)

20. (original) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the masking signal is provided only when speech is present.

21. (currently amended) A system for masking speech, said system comprising:

signal acquiring apparatus for generating an electrical signal representative of the speech;

processing apparatus for using said electrical signal to provide an audio signal which cancels the speech; and

a signal generator for providing a speech masking signal to mask any speech not canceled; wherein said signal generator comprises:

a sampler for sampling portions of the speech;

a memory for storing the portions of the speech that are sampled; [[and]]

a memory reader for providing the portions in the memory in reverse order; and

means for changing at least one of amplitude and frequency of the masking signal at variable intervals.

22. (original) A system as recited in claim 21, wherein said speech masking signal generator is a babble generator.

23. (currently amended) A system as recited in claim 21, wherein said signal generator comprises circuitry ~~circuitry~~ for rearranging the speech so that said speech masking signal is not intelligible.

24. - 25. (canceled)

26. (original) A system as recited in claim 21, wherein said signal generator comprises:

a memory for storing digital representations of signals disruptive to the understanding of speech; and

a converter for converting the digital representations in the memory to said speech masking signal.

27. (original) A system as recited in claim 26, wherein said digital representations in said memory are in the form of one of pulse code modulation and adaptive pulse code modulation.

28. - 34. (canceled)

35. (previously presented) A method as recited in claim 21, wherein said signal generator comprises:

a sampler for sampling portions of the speech; and

a reverser for providing the portions in said reverse order and with a predetermined time delay.

36. - 39. (canceled)

40. (original) A system as recited in claim 21, in combination with a programmed digital computer, the system having an output for providing said electrical signal representative of the speech to said digital computer.

41. (original) A system as recited in claim 21, implemented on a digital computer, said computer having access to program code for implementing at least a portion of said system.

42. (previously presented) A system as recited in claim 21, wherein said signal generator is configured so as to produce a masking signal only when speech is present.

43. (currently amended) An article of manufacture comprising a computer usable medium having computer readable program code means embodied therein for causing a computer to:

generate an electrical signal representative of the speech[[:]];

use said electrical signal to provide an audio signal which cancels the speech; and

provide a speech masking signal to mask any speech not canceled; further comprising program code for producing said speech masking signal by:

sampling portions of the speech; [[and]]

providing the portions in reverse order; and

changing at least one of amplitude and frequency of the masking signal at variable intervals.

44. (original) An article of manufacture as recited in claim 43, further comprising program code for effecting a babble generator to supply said speech masking signal.

45. (original) An article of manufacture as recited in claim 43, further comprising program code for producing said speech masking signal by rearranging the speech so that it is not intelligible.

46. - 47. (canceled).

48. (original) An article of manufacture as recited in claim 43, wherein said computer code for providing a speech masking signal comprises code for:

digital representations of signals disruptive to the understanding of speech; and for

converting the digital representations to said speech masking signal.

49. (original) An article of manufacture as recited in claim 48, wherein said digital representations are in the form of one of pulse code modulation and adaptive pulse code modulation.

50. - 56. (canceled).

57. (previously presented) An article of manufacture as recited in claim 43, wherein the program code for producing the speech masking signal includes program code for:

sampling portions of the speech; and

providing the portions in said reverse order and with a predetermined time delay.

58. - 61. (canceled).

62. (original) An article of manufacture as recited in claim 43, in combination with a computer for reading and executing said computer readable program code.